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USSR PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES
UNDER FIFTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN (1951-1955)

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 Minister of Public Health USSR

The decisions of the 19th Congress of the VKP(b), and Stalin's work, "Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR," open lofty prospects for the further development of socialist economy and culture.

The basic economic law of socialism, plainly and scientifically formulated by Stalin, was expressed clearly in the directives of the session pertaining to the Fifth Five-Year Plan. Essentially, this law consists of providing maximum satisfaction of the continually growing material and cultural needs of the entire society via uninterrupted increase and improvement of production on the basis of superior technology.

At the 19th Party Congress, G. M. Malenkov stated, on behalf of the Central Committee: "In the future, our party will also devote untiring attention to the maximum satisfaction of the continually increasing needs of the Soviet people, because the welfare of the Soviet citizen and the well-being of the Soviet people constitute the highest law of our party."

There has been a sharp increase in the network of sanitation-antiepidemic institutions, these institutions are better equipped with therapeutic and diagnostic apparatus, institutions of higher medical education are larger, and the number of medical personnel, especially the number of doctors, has increased greatly.

The number of hospital beds increased 25.2 percent during the Fourth Five-Year Plan alone. In the Lithuanian SSR, the number of hospital beds increased 57 percent, in the Latvian SSR 39 percent, and the Moldavian SSR 46 percent.

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At present, there are 5,585 sanitation-epidemiological stations in the country. No city or rayon is without a sanitation-epidemiological station.

During the Fourth Five-Year Plan, the number of X-ray machines in municipal therapeutic-prophylactic installations increased 2.5-fold. In rural installations, X-ray machines increased by the factor of 5.5.

Now, 83 percent more medical installations have clinicodiagnostic laboratories. The number of physiotherapeutic treatment rooms has doubled, showing a 7.5-fold increase in rural areas.

During the postwar Five-Year Plan, 104,000 doctors and 254,000 medical workers with specialized intermediate-level training were trained. At present, nearly 300,000 doctors and 900,000 fel'dshers, nurses, and other personnel of an intermediate level of training are working in metropolitan and rural therapeutic installations.

No other country in the world has as large a cadre of physicians as the Soviet Union. Each year, the institutes of higher medical education of the USSR take in students and turn out physicians in numbers three to four times greater than the US.

The USSR, especially in postwar years, has attained important achievements in the development of rural public health, and in therapeutic-prophylactic, and sanitation-antiepidemic services to kolkhoz laborers.

At present, no rural rayon of the Soviet Union is without doctors or without the services of doctors.

In 1950, 30.9 percent of the rayons had 15 doctors or more; 22.5 percent had 11-15 doctors; 36.1 percent had 6-10 doctors; 9.2 percent had 3-5 doctors; and 1.3 percent of the rayons had 1-2 doctors. Thus, 90 percent of rural rayons had six or more doctors.

More than 80 percent of the rural rayons provide not only general medical aid, but specialized medical aid in the fields of surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, therapy, and other specialties.

It may be noted that in the US 40 million people, or nearly one fourth of the population, are deprived of the means to pay the necessary fees enabling them to receive the simplest type of medical aid in rural areas. As was stated in a 1952 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, there are no public health organs in the areas inhabited by these 40 million people.

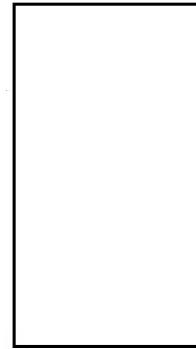
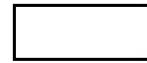
After World War II, the USSR government issued a series of important decrees aimed at sharply increasing the quality of medical service to the population. With the aim of bringing nearer to the population a competent and efficient medical service, a program of basic unification of hospitals with polyclinics was carried out, providing all conditions favorable to enlarging the practical experience of therapeutic personnel, and thereby also raising the quality of prophylactic and therapeutic work.

For improving the direction of medical-prophylactic installations of public health organs, the posts of chief specialists for internal diseases, surgery, obstetrics, and childhood (detstvo) were introduced.

Every year the state allocates large funds for the purpose of training physician-specialists for rural therapeutic-prophylactic installations, permitting expansion of the system of advancement and specialization of doctors.

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In the postwar years, production of medicines, medical apparatus, and instruments increased sharply.

The mortality rate has decreased as a result of raising the material and cultural level of the population and improvement of medical service. During the past 3 years, the net increase in population was 9.5 million.

In the postwar years, a sharp (greater than ten-fold) reduction in the incidence of malaria was achieved. There is every cause to believe that in the next year or two, the incidence of malaria in the Soviet Union will be reduced to zero. Relapsing fever has been eradicated throughout the USSR, and in many rayons and oblasts there are virtually no cases of typhus. The rate of incidence of other nosological forms is also decreasing.

Considering the aid preferred by party and Soviet organs, it is the medical workers' duty to insure further improvement and development of the public health service of the population.

The party announced the following tasks:

To expand, over a 5-year period, the network of hospitals, dispensaries, lying-in homes, sanatoria, rest homes, nurseries, and kindergartens; to increase the number of hospital beds by not less than 20 percent (including a 40-percent increase in the Lithuanian SSR, 30 percent in the Latvian SSR, and 30 percent in the Estonian SSR); increase the capacity of sanatoria 15 percent, the capacity of rest homes 30 percent, and the capacity of nurseries 40 percent.

To ensure the utmost degree of equipment of hospitals, dispensaries, and sanatoria with the latest medical facilities, and ensure improvement of the cultural level of their work.

To increase the number of doctors, over the 5-year period, by not less than 25 percent, and further develop methods for the advanced training of physicians.

To direct the efforts of medical scientific workers toward solving the most important problems of public health, focusing particular attention on the problems of prophylaxis, to ensure the quickest utilization advances of medical science by medical practice.

To increase production of drugs, medical equipment, and instruments, by 1955, to two and one half times the 1950 level, paying particular attention to expansion of production of the newest drugs and other effective therapeutic-prophylactic agents, and also expansion of production of modern diagnostic and therapeutic medical equipment.

The Soviet public health system has all the resources and facilities for creditably fulfilling the tasks of protecting the health of the people, as established by the 19th Party Congress. The Soviet public health system has at its disposal a ramified network of therapeutic-prophylactic and sanitation-antiepidemic institutions, scientific research institutions and universities, with excellent physician, fel'dsher, and nurse personnel, to whom any task may be entrusted for solution.

The very great potential of the Soviet public health system is engaged in further reducing disease and in reducing the death rates of the general population and of children. This potential must be utilized to the fullest extent.

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A further increase in the quality of medical service to the population enables earlier discovery of illnesses, at a stage when they still have a functional character and when correct therapeutic methods can forestall their further development into the organic stage. Such an approach requires that physicians have much more extensive clinical knowledge and that the directors of public health organs and installations devote increased attention to the dispensary-polyclinical aspect of their work.

Organizational measures which have been completed already have had a decisive effect on the quality of prophylaxis and therapy. The mortality rate has decreased twofold since the prewar year 1940.

Analysis of prophylaxis and therapy statistics shows that 1951 qualitative indexes were considerably higher for municipal hospitals of the Ukrainian SSR, than for the Azerbaydzhan, Georgian, and Uzbek SSRs, where the work of some municipal hospitals can be greatly improved.

The material means of the public health system of the Ukrainian SSR in no way differ from that of the aforementioned other republics, neither in the number of therapeutic-prophylactic and sanitation-antiepidemic institutions nor in the number of physicians. On the contrary, there is a higher ratio of physicians per population in the Azerbaydzhan, Georgian, and Uzbek SSRs, than in the Ukrainian SSR. This emphasizes the fact that in the struggle to improve the qualitative indexes of the therapeutic-prophylactic service of the population, the number of physicians, institutions, and beds are not the only factors, and that an important role is played by the quality of work, primarily the clinical training of physicians, knowledge, and extensive application of modern methods of diagnosis, prophylaxis, and therapy.

The primary task is the following: to achieve unification of hospital and polyclinic installation, available resources should be completely utilized, more daring should be exercised in streamlining therapeutic-prophylactic institutions, aiming at mutual utilization of building facilities, and new construction speeded up in accordance with the people's economic plan. This practice is being put to use successfully in several Ukrainian cities, particularly in Kiev. Public health organs must rely on active aid given by local soviets in this very important matter.

Second, the attention of the directors of public health organs and installations and that of chief specialists must be focused on raising the quality of the dispensary-polyclinical division of work, on utmost consolidation of public health service given to the population within districts, and on the problems of educating the clinical thinking of district physicians.

The importance of individual prophylaxis in further reducing the death rate and disease morbidity should no longer be underestimated. At the moment of its onset, an illness has a functional character; quantitative changes occur in the limits of physiological norms, as was initially described by Pavlov. The basic task of workers of scientific-practical medical institutions is to learn to distinguish these functional disorders, to perfect methods of research, and to prevent the further development of the affliction.

District doctors and dispensary-polyclinic divisions of hospitals have an important role in this matter. Directors of public health organs and installations should, therefore, devote the necessary attention to district doctors, to their development in practical work, to their education, and also to control of their activity.

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Thirdly, the task consists of systematically strengthening medical districts, expanding the district network, and aiming to have the work of the district physician conform to established norms. The annual increase in the number of listed positions of staff doctors should be reviewed for this purpose, and those positions which keep a physician from doing a physician's work must be cut down.

Material and infant welfare is a subject of special interest of the government.

Maternal and infant mortality is decreasing in the Soviet Union from year to year. Significant advances have been achieved in this field. Infant mortality in the USSR has decreased twofold since 1940.

However, these results could be improved with the elimination of serious defects connected with the inadequate clinical training of district physicians, and with undervaluation of the work of district physicians, pediatricians, and obstetricians-gynecologists in the matter of early detection of the pathological course of a pregnancy as well as in early detection of diseases in children.

The chief causes of death in children up to one year old are: pneumonia (approximately 50 percent of all deaths), diseases of the newborn, and gastrointestinal disorders. Modern Soviet medicine has powerful means at its disposal for combating the mortality from these diseases. The means of combating these diseases must be correct and timely in their application, i.e., they must be applicable in its early stages, within the first few days of the illness.

It is impossible to count on success in overcoming maternal and infant mortality without first sharply increasing the clinical knowledge of district physicians, pediatricians, and obstetricians-gynecologists. The proper conditions favorable for such an increase may be created only in unified institutions. In unified institutions, the physician is able both to work in the hospital (statsininar) and also work either in the district, or do consultative work in addition to that. Under this arrangement, there is systematic control over the work of district physicians, and they may receive daily aid from the chief physician, from department heads, and from chief specialists.

Improving the quality of execution of all matters pertaining to maternal and infant welfare means solving a task of state significance, which inevitably has a positive effect on protection of the health of the total adult population as well. It is Pavlov's teaching that any illness which is contracted, especially in childhood, leaves a trace in the organism, and makes the organism more vulnerable, even if the illness was not accompanied by complications.

Therefore, in the end result, improving prophylaxis of children's diseases, also enables solution of the problems of protecting the health of the adult population.

The USSR was the first country in history to organize rural public health service which offers qualified medical service in the basic medical specialties.

In rural areas, unification of hospitals with polyclinics is particularly beneficial to enlargement of the clinical training, and to the consolidation of rural physicians. The time has long passed when peasants, as a rule, journeyed to the city for medical aid. Now, virtually everywhere, there are specialized medical facilities in rayon centers for serving the rural population. Measures such as establishing hospitals in rayon centers, with staffs of specialists including surgeons, therapists, obstetricians, pediatricians, roentgenologists and phthisiologists, and in many places, specialists in even narrower fields, have been particularly effective in approximating a fully qualified medical service for kolkhoz workers.

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It may be said without exaggeration that a radical qualitative change has taken place in the composition of rural medical personnel. The initial specialization of cadres of physicians conducted by the Soviet public health organs on the bases of large local hospitals, advancement of the knowledge of specialists in institutes, the daily, meticulous instruction of physicians by the chief specialists of oblasts, krays and republics, and especially, the awakening of the physicians' desire to improve their clinical training, and their resolute, independent daily, studies have had a beneficial effect on the quality of the medical service given to the population.

Medical culture is improving steadily in many hospitals of rural rayons. It is significant that physicians of rural hospitals now figure in many publicized events, and that not infrequently they show good examples of creative mastery of the advances of Soviet science.

The psychprophylactic method of obstetric anesthesia which now is used extensively was first tested in practice in the rural rayon of Krasnodarsk, Khar'kov Oblast.

A group of workers of the Makarov rural hospital, Kiev Oblast, in striving to improve medical culture, exhibited commendable initiative in the practical application of the principles of Pavlov's teaching on the therapeutic-prophylactic method. Thus, the progressive teaching of Pavlov already has been employed as the methodological basis for the therapeutic-prophylactic work of many medical institutions. The Ministry of Public Health RSFSR recently held a republic-level conference for the purpose of exchanging experiences in the reorganization of therapeutic and prophylactic activity on the basis of the physiological teachings of I. P. Pavlov. This conference was held at Vinogradov, Moscow Oblast, which is where physicians of a rayon hospital first transformed Pavlov's physiological teaching into practice in the RSFSR and graphically demonstrated that the experience of innovators is growing to be massive.

The physicians of Chudnov Rayon, Zhitomir Oblast, greatly aided kolkhoz production through active and efficient dispensary treatment of kolkhoz members, thoroughly checking the health of all of the agricultural population, and providing differentiated, effective therapy through the services of the specialists of rayon and district hospitals. Illnesses among kolkhoz members decreased sharply following the introduction of the dispensary method of treatment in Chudnov Rayon. Thus, the creative work of medical personnel enabled the people, the party, and the state to solve problems of the people's economy successfully. As a result, the authority of medical workers has grown immeasurably in the eyes of the population, and their role as active participants in the building of Communism in the USSR has increased.

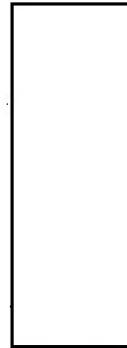
Henceforth, even greater persistence must be exercised in carrying out the designated measures and in generalizing and popularizing the foremost achievements.

In 1951, there were nearly twice as many physicians working in rural areas as in 1945. This included an especially sharp increase in the number of physician-specialists in rayon centers. This expanded the range of specialized medical treatment, which is reflected in the increased occupancy of hospital beds in rural therapeutic-prophylactic institutions. Consequently, fatalities in rural hospitals have been decreasing from year to year, and continue to decrease.

However, the executive committees of the soviets of worker deputies of some oblasts and rayons, which are concerned with total public health, and with creating the appropriate conditions, have not devoted sufficient attention to this problem. To a large degree, this is precisely the cause of the great

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turnover in personnel and understaffing of rayon hospitals with physicians. This situation is characteristic for the oblasts of the Kazakh and Turkmen SSRs. In the Kazakh SSR, there are no surgeons in 33 percent of the rayons, no obstetricians-gynecologists in 25 percent of the rayons, and no pediatricians in 23 percent of the rayons. In the Turkmen SSR, 54 percent of the rayons have no surgeons, 45 percent of the rayons have no obstetricians-gynecologists, and 58 percent of the rayons have no pediatricians.

The task, then, consists of continuing to consolidate rural rayon hospitals with dispensaries, and liquidating the inattention of divisional organs of public health and of workers of the executive committees of soviets of workers deputies, as far as rural public health needs and the needs of rural physicians are concerned. Within the next 3 years, it is essential that there be at least six to ten physicians in each rural rayon.

In addition to raising public health practice to the level of the advances of clinical medicine, further raising the quality of therapeutic-prophylactic service of the population also requires extensive development of scientific research work based on the Pavlovian physiological doctrine applied to actual problems presented by the demands of public health practice.

The party, the government, and Stalin are devoting a great deal of attention to the development of scientific research in the field of medicine.

Soviet public health has at its disposal 255 scientific research institutes, which are occupied with scientific research in the field of medicine.

Many problems of diagnosis, prophylaxis, and, consequently also therapy, still have not been solved. This impairs success in combating mortality and reducing incidence of diseases. The scientific research institutes of the public health system, and especially of the Academy of Medical Sciences, must focus especial attention, and concentrate maximum scientific resources on the solution of the tasks of specific prophylaxis of diseases such as influenza, whooping cough, scarlet fever and measles, which cannot be overcome successfully without solution of the problems of specific immunoprophylaxis. Many USSR scientists have been working in these fields of study for a long time, and have had some success. It is essential that they be extended every aid in the solution of important tasks.

Public health practice is deficient in the consolidation and extension of scientific research in the fields of prophylaxis and therapy of cardiovascular diseases and rheumatism, and in the prophylaxis and therapy of neoplasms. These are the most serious diseases, and result in the highest percentage of mortality. Henceforward, it will be impossible to tolerate the condition in which, in many institutes of the Academy of Medical Sciences, the problems of rheumatism, neuroses, gastritis, and angina were not studied at all, and the study of cardiovascular diseases was evidently neglected.

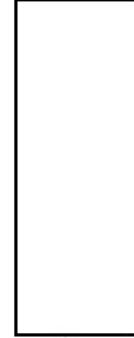
Special scientific research institutions of a clinical and theoretical nature have been established in the USSR, which are conducting manifold studies on the problem of cancer. Methods of detecting precancerous illnesses already have been incorporated into public health practice. In many cases, these methods permit warning of the development of malignant neoplasms.

In many instances, early diagnosis and therapy of cancerous illnesses is very difficult, and solution of these tasks is to be sought not only in perfecting clinical methods of diagnosis and therapy, but also in the development of serological and immunobiological methods of diagnosis and prophylaxis of cancer. There is ground for predicting that by proceeding in this direction, substantial successes may be achieved in the fight against cancer in the near future.

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In conformance with the directives of the 19th Party Congress, during 1951 - 1955, 135,000 physician-specialists will receive advanced training and will specialize by taking varicous courses at institutes for advancement and specialization. This undertaking should be organized so that the studies of the physicians will meet requirements, arm medical cadres with durable knowledge, and broaden their clinical horizon.

The production enterprises of the Ministry of Public Health USSR have a great role in the struggle for attaining a higher level of medical service for the population, and in combating the death rate and disease morbidity. In 1952, medical production subordinated to the USSR was seven times that of 1940; and in 1955, production will exceed the 1940 level by the factor of 13.5. The production of antibiotics and other highly effective chemicopharmaceutical preparations is receiving special attention.

This year saw the appearance of an entire series of highly effective therapeutic and prophylactic drugs. Among these, the new antituberculosis drug phthivaccine deserves particular attention. Its therapeutic effectiveness is no less than that of streptomycin, and it has several very important advantages over streptomycin: it is not toxic, does not evoke secondary effects, and is simple to administer (in powder or tablet form).

Of even greater significance is the new antibiotic albomycin, which has proved effective in treating pneumonia and septic diseases of young children; also, synthomycin has been shown to be effective in the treatment of many diseases, viz. dysentery, early stages of brucellosis, etc.

Synthetic drugs, such as methyltestosterone, testosterone propionate and acetate, progestrone and pregnin are being used extensively in medical practice. Along with their customary use as the most effective agents for the treatment of hormonal disturbances of the male and female organisms, these drugs are employed successfully in the treatment of several forms of cancer, and also in the treatment of blood circulation disturbances, tumorous diseases, and other illnesses.

The new drug pachyc spine (pakhikarpin) is very effective in the treatment of endarteritis obliterans, muscular dystrophy, and affections of the vegetative nervous ganglia. This drug also is valuable for its capacity to accelerate obstetric activity. Other new medicines deserving special attention are the sedative promedol, which has many advantages over morphine; and tiphen, which acts against spasms of the blood vessels of internal organs, especially the vessels of the heart. The drug trimetin has been found to be effective in the treatment of minor forms of epilepsy, especially in children. Diplatsin is very important in surgery, especially for relaxing the musculature during surgery.

Dicumarin has good blood anticoagulating characteristics, and is very important in the prophylaxis and therapy of thrombosis, embolisms, and myocardic infarct.

In 1955, the manufacture of medical, surgical, and traumatological first aid and prosthetic equipment will be between two and three times greater than in 1950. This permits greater stocking of therapeutic-prophylactic institutions with modern diagnostic and therapeutic equipment. One of the important tasks of medical production is to exert the utmost effort to increase the quality of products, and to improve apparatuses and instruments. The great and serious deficiencies in this field must be eliminated.

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Under the directives of the 19th Party Congress, protection of workers in production enterprises will be further improved.

A great deal of attention is being devoted to the problems of improving working conditions and living conditions of laborers, as is clearly seen in the construction of new and the reconstruction of old production enterprises, as well as in the construction of dwellings and cultural establishments. All this is done for the purpose of creating the conditions most favorable to the physical and spiritual development of the Soviet people.

The transformation-of-nature program permits millions of hectares of land to be carved out of the elements, protects agriculture against the pernicious influence of dry periods and droughts, changes the climate and the flora and fauna of a great territory of the Soviet Union, improves the environment of the Soviet people, and eliminates many factors which have a deleterious influence on the health of the population.

The extensive prophylactic measures which have been developed in the USSR have an integral effect on building the Soviet society and state. With the aim of maintaining hygienic conditions as far as the purity of air and water are concerned, the USSR withholds approval of projects and does not give permission for the activation of new enterprises, electric stations, thermal electric centers, and divisional shops and aggregates unless appropriate purification facilities have been provided.

In the USSR, a large army of state sanitation inspection and sanitation-antiepidemic service workers, invested by the Soviet government with great authority (prava), stands guard over the enforcement of legislation which provides measures for the purification of air, soil, and water in order to create and maintain sanitary conditions.

However, the work of these organs contains great deficiencies. State inspectors of sanitation and sanitation physicians frequently show liberality with respect to negligent agricultural division heads who are violating sanitation legislation and are not providing protection of workers in production enterprises. Liberalism and tolerance have been noted on the part of sanitation division workers, viz., in the production enterprises of the Magnitogorsk Combine, the Ural Machine Factory (Uralmashzavod), etc.

It is essential that the liberal attitude toward persons who permit themselves to violate the Soviet sanitation laws be categorically terminated.

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